

## CHRISTIANS AND LAWSUITS

### TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

#### INTRODUCTION:

1. We have been looking at the various problems in the church of Corinth – carnality, divisions and factions, pride, immorality, etc.
2. Tonight, we will consider another problem – Christians taking other believers to court in order to settle their disputes (6:1).
3. The words, “Dare any of you...” (6:1) indicate the apostle Paul’s displeasure. “Dare” means, “to be bold, not to dread or shun through fear.”
4. We saw the same word Sunday night in our study in Luke 20 – “And after that they durst (dare) not ask him any question at all” (Luke 20:40).
5. Paul was displeased because their lawsuits were a bad testimony in the worldly city of Corinth. It is a blight on their Christian testimony when believers try to settle their disputes before pagan judges.
6. A while back, a Baptist church in the Philippines had an ugly split and they went to court before a Roman Catholic judge. In my opinion, that was unscriptural.
7. The Bible does not say Christians should never go to court. A crooked contractor sued our church and put a lien on our building. We found out later on that he had a history of doing that. We had no choice but to hire a lawyer, and this Christian lawyer advised us to countersue. We did as he said and the contractor dropped his suit and removed the lien.
8. So sometimes Christians need to go to court. Paul himself said, “I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar” (Acts 28:19). Paul felt he had no choice.
9. But Christians should never sue fellow Christians. There are no exceptions. It is better to “take wrong” and “suffer yourselves to be defrauded” (cheated) than to go to court with a fellow Christian (6:7).

#### **I. IT IS A BAD TESTIMONY TO SUE FELLOW BELIEVERS**

1. When a Christian takes another Christian to court, he is telling the world that Christians are no different from the worldly crowd.
2. Those who are unsaved are referred to here as “the unjust” (6:1). How can we expect justice from the unjust? If the unjust cannot understand spiritual things, it is foolish to expect them to be of any help (cf. 2:14).

3. The same Greek word translated “unjust” in verse 1 is translated “unrighteous” in verse 9. This passage (I Corinthians 6:1-8) is connected to verses 9 and following.
4. Paul is saying, “Do you expect the unrighteous (“unjust” – vs. 1), the fornicators, and idolaters, and adulterers, and the effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals), and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers (abusive railers), and extortioners to be able to judge a dispute among Christians?”
5. Paul is asking, “What do these people know about God or the Bible or church matters?”
6. H.A. Ironside said that Christians taking each other to court “is utterly abhorrent to the spirit of Christianity. It puts the Christian in a false position before the world and before his brethren. It is saying to the world, ‘We Christians are just as covetous and just as quarrelsome, we are just as much concerned about having our own way and about self-pleasing as you of the world are. We recognize your judges as having authority over the church of God,’ and it is degrading to the Christian thus to act” (*I Corinthians*).
7. Paul reminded them that someday, “the saints shall judge the world” (6:2). Second Timothy 2:12 says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”
8. Therefore, we should be able “to judge the smallest matters” that come up between us (I Cor. 6:2). {“Small” in comparison.}
9. When we consider the things that Christians fight over – money, possessions, property, etc. – what are these when viewed in light of eternity. From God’s perspective they are “small” (6:2b).

## **II. SINCE WE WILL ONE DAY JUDGE THE WORLD, WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES TODAY**

1. The Bible teaches that someday we “shall judge the world” (6:2; cf. Revelation 20:6) and “we shall judge angels” (6:3).
2. By comparing this Scripture with II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, we can conclude Paul is referring to the judgment of fallen angels.
3. Even the “least esteemed in the church” (6:4) are better qualified than unsaved judges.

4. Genesis 13:7 says that “there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle.” Furthermore, it says that “the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.”
5. In other words, Abraham and Lot were surrounded by ungodly heathen, and these heathen were observing them. Abraham wisely said to Lot, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren” (Genesis 13:8).

### **III. IT IS BETTER TO “TAKE WRONG” THAN TO “DO WRONG”**

1. Verse 7 says, “Why do ye not rather take (accept or suffer) wrong?”
2. Verse 8 says, “Nay, ye do wrong.” Therefore, it is better to accept wrong than ruin a friendship or hurt our Christian testimony.
3. That is why Jesus said, “And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also” (Matthew 5:40).
4. The idea here in I Corinthians 6 is that Christians should settle their differences among themselves. If necessary, they should seek out “a wise man” among them to act as an arbitrator (6:5).
5. But for a brother to go to law with another brother, “and that before the unbelievers” (6:6), is “wrong” (6:7, 8).
6. If Christians cannot settle a dispute, it is better to drop it altogether, and then commit it unto the Lord. We need to trust God that He can work it out. To go to court demonstrates a lack of faith in God.
7. Philippians 2:3 and 4 says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”
8. If we suffer loss, and if we commit the problem to God, He can easily make it up for us. Someone said that when a Christian takes another Christian to court the one who wins is the devil!

### **CONCLUSION:**

I will conclude with a story from H.A. Ironside:

Many years ago, as a little fellow I attended a meeting in Toronto where some difficulty had come up between brethren and they did as the apostle suggests. My dear mother took me along. “Little pitchers have big ears,” and I well remember how horrified I was to see men I esteemed and had been taught to respect apparently so indignant with each other. I can remember one man springing to his feet and with clenched fists saying, “I will put up with a good deal, but one thing I

will not put up with, I will not allow you to put anything over on me; I will have my rights!" An old Scotch brother who was rather hard of hearing leaned forward holding his ear and said, "What was that, brother? I did not get that!" "I say, I will have my rights," said the man. "But you did not mean that, did you? Your rights? If ye had your rights, you would be in hell, wouldn't you? And you are forgetting - - aren't you? -- that Jesus did not come to get His rights, He came to get His wrongs, and He got them." I can still see that man standing there for a moment like one transfixed, and then the tears broke from his eyes and he said, "Brethren, I have been all wrong. Handle the case as you think best," and he sat down and put his face in his hands and sobbed before the Lord, and everything was settled in three minutes. When in this spirit it is so easy to clear things up; when we bow before the Lord, He straightens them out. (*I Corinthians*).